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# REVIEWS

## SPANISH READERS

### PRELIMINARY REMARKS

Who, what and "when" is the ideal reviewer? Ideally the reviewer of a school-book should reserve his opinion, at least if committed to cold print, on any text until he has given it an honest test in his own class room. But even if this were desirable, it is obviously impracticable. Fortunately, however, the experienced schoolmaster can detect the essential worth or worthlessness of a given text on careful perusal. Intuitively he looks for one or more features that his experience has convinced him constitute an essential advance over its predecessors or competitors. Often a cursory examination reveals whether or not the new arrival is entitled to his serious consideration. He will not be blind to its excellences. The element of prejudice is quite negligible.

But the more intricate question interjects itself: Whom does the review serve? In every school-book a trinity of interests is involved. In polite society we denote them as author-editor-compiler, publisher and teacher. That the more immediate aims of the two former may converge into a reasonably selfish one does not concern us here. The consumer is that larger community that makes the schools possible and by whom the teacher is deputized to select the books for the pupils to buy or to borrow—in either case to *use*. To say that the public always gets what it wants in this commodity, the school-book, is a sad reflection on society, let alone the educators. It may get what it deserves, as a reward of its own indifference.

Now the lack of mutual regard and proper co-operation among the three parties here in question has been and still is lamentable and a great hindrance to the best classroom interests. What quantities of school books go into the discard every year! Books, similar in type, have been issued in such quick succession, even by the same house, as to make impossible a fair trial of any one of them and a record of results during a single year, not to say a high school generation. Such haste and overproduction is equally unfair to all parties concerned.

The perplexities caused by the numerous books clamoring for recognition is brought home to those who have served on and labored with textbook committees, and they alone know how difficult it is to select for their fellow-workers the book of fewest regrets, the book of the utmost serviceability to teacher and to pupil.

The final arbiter, then, both of the author's work and the publisher's sagacity, and as such the most important member of this threefold group at interest, is the teacher, and him the reviewer will have primarily in mind.

If what has been said of textbooks in general be at all relevant, it is equally applicable to any one division of instruction, and the modern

languages come in for our particular solicitude. Spanish, on account of the relative recency of its introduction into the public school curriculum is spared much of the censure attached to French and German publications. Teachers of Spanish therefore may learn from the successes and failures of their colleagues in the other foreign languages, for their problems are the same. It is with the view of establishing a better understanding between authors and publishers of Spanish books and the teachers of Spanish that these paragraphs have been written; it is hoped that there may be avoided much of the disappointment, the costly labor and futile effort expended on the other modern language texts; likewise the rebellion and bitterness of spirit which the prescribed employment of unsuitable textbooks produces in teachers with the resultant injustice to the pupils.

The more immediate topic engaging our attention is that of Spanish readers. We have been told that a reading habit is one-third of an education. All systematic language teaching revolves about some sort of text, be it phrase-book, fable, anecdote, tale, classic, or the like. Hence the reading-matter cannot be too carefully selected and edited. It must introduce *Realien*, i. e., impart knowledge about the real things impinging upon our daily life in our homes, in our occupations, in our various social relationships; in short, all the objects and ideas that enter into our workaday experience and the vocabulary to express them. It requires a master to write or to construct a reader that will systematically bring these various elements into play, with naturalness, yet with the proper gradation for the beginner.

Readers are primarily intended as an introduction into the language and not to literature proper. It is my conviction that the "classic," pure and undefiled, has no real place in the high-school course before the third year. We must simply face the fact that the American youth, at this stage of immaturity, cannot properly appreciate a foreign classic. Besides it is an injustice to the author to blame him, or to even expose him to the crude criticism of adolescents for not being understandable. If he amounted to anything in his own country, he wrote for his own people, and not with one eye on a possible future ninth or tenth grader in far off America. A well-arranged reader—and its keynote should be Unity in Diversity—is the sufficient portion of our neophytes. If they do not continue beyond the second year they will have had variety enough in a good reader and a far more useful stock of words than any one strictly literary text can supply, and they will be prepared to read the simple classics by themselves, if interested; if they do go on with their foreign language they will in due season be inducted into the higher reaches of real literature.

That teachers of Spanish have not lacked material in the way of "readers" is evidenced by the twenty-six eclectic, academic readers (exclusive of beginners' books, abridged classics, commercial, scientific, historical, etc.) that have accumulated on my shelves. These are nearly all that have ever been published in the United States, and a number of them are

among the most popular. They have been put out by ten different American publishers within the past twenty years. They have appeared as follows: one each in 1897, 1899, 1900, 1902, 1905, 1909, 1910, 1912 and 1914; two each in 1907 and 1908; five in 1916 and eight in 1917. No two of them are by the same compilers, although one name appears in collaboration. Two books bear the names of women, both in collaboration; one is compiled by two women. With two or three exceptions none of the selections is duplicated and the only things common to all of them are a text and a vocabulary; here and there one observes attempts at grading. None of them makes reference to its fellows. Why should any of these be placed in the pupil's hands in preference to the other?

Are there no criteria, no definite desiderata that may be posited for a "reader" after all these years of experimentation? In order to make the matter clear to my own mind, I had to draft an outline of what a "reader" would mean to me, and what I herewith submit is my estimate of such a thing from the view of hypothetical authorship. It is the result of contact during many years, in and out of the classroom, with a number of modern language readers, more or less satisfactory, and of the greatest variety.

The following observations embody points to be considered in the making of a good modern high-school reader in Spanish:

1. Authorship.—It should be compiled by experienced teachers in actual service, or by those who have recently been such; men or women, thoroughly conversant and sympathetic with the American youth. It would seem that joint-editorship is preferable to one man responsibility. Collaboration invariably means a better product; the interchange of ideas, the mutual inspiration and encouragement in what must be exacting labor, as well as the restraint on each other, so necessary to such an undertaking.

2. Subject-matter.—Like any other good textbook a reader should be limited and definite in scope. If the collection is made up of literary pieces there will be a great mass of material to choose from; but the selection must be made with specific aims: first, in regard to the pupil's ability to master it reasonably, with the legitimate aids (see below) usually conceded; secondly, with a view to inherent, purposeful interest, contributing to the intellectual growth of the pupil.

The first third of the book should be well-graded prose. The question of gradation is the bug-bear of every editor-compiler. It cannot be too painstakingly done. It practically means original authorship, a carefully planned and constructed text by a conscientious and far-sighted writer. He must be able to foresee the succession in which certain difficulties will arise and how to meet them, how to clear them away in as logical an order as the genius of simple, natural discourse will permit.

The subject-matter of such a constructed text should include the everyday happenings in the home, school and politico-social life of the student, so that its vocabulary may comprise at least the names of the parts of the

body, of the clothes, of the household, of the school-room and of the school and local government; of the commoner animals, herbs, flowers, food-stuffs, means of locomotion, neighborhood geography, and kindred matters. A second part may well be built around selected topics on the more important and better known Spanish-American countries—their traits, customs, institutions and history, together with brief mention of the more important members of the Pan-American Union and the part of the United States of North America therein. It hardly admits of argument nowadays that the motive of the average American taking up the study of Spanish is his interest in South America rather than in the Iberian Peninsula. A third part may comprise selected complete short stories, carefully edited, typical of the life and characteristics of Old Spain. They should be chosen with particular attention to their vocabulary. Proverbs, simple verse, a few national hymns, and popular songs with musical notation lend added atmosphere.

Somewhere in the book, before or after the regular reading matter, should be inserted a fairly complete classroom word-list, such as directions by the teachers and responses by the pupils, greetings, letter-writing formulas, etc. A prepared list of these would be time-saving to both teacher and pupils and more than compensate for the extra effort of the compilers and the slight added expense of the publishers.

3. Amount of text.—One hundred pages, exclusive of illustrations, would suffice. This would allow the teacher some leeway for personal initiative, for the introduction of other material of his own choice as occasion or desire may dictate.

4. Vocabulary.—Extent: two thousand words is a generous maximum, about half of which ought to become an active vocabulary by the end of the year. Simpler idiomatic locutions (with cross references) may well be relegated to the general vocabulary. Training the pupils to observe the finer shades of meaning, to have them weigh and consider subtleties of phrase, to make them exercise a choice of the proper meaning is splendid pedagogy. The vocabulary ought to contain all forms of the irregular verbs occurring in the text; also the definite article before all nouns for the sake of association. Although the function of the vocabulary is primarily to give definitions, it would seem a useful extension to include under the word concerned whatever brief informational comment may be called for: biographical, historical, literary, etc., usually incorporated in the notes. In this way it is bound to come to the pupil's attention at the right time.

5. Notes.—The proper office of the notes is to explain. The less explanation there is to make the better, and then only the most unusual syntactic or other unavoidable difficulties and allusions, requiring elucidation. If notes serve any useful purpose at all they should be a help and time-saving to the pupil in his preparation of the day's assignment.

6. Compositional features.—To some teachers questions and exer-

cises, written and oral, are an offense. In that case they can easily be ignored. To others they are a decided aid because they offer something definite, a certain minimum for which to hold the class responsible. Well-arranged questions and exercises, always connected and having direct bearing on the text, involving practical use of idiom, suggestive and setting a problem, seem worth their while.

7. Other apparatus.—Illustrations are indispensable and should be plentiful. They are often as near "realien" as the majority of classes ever get. No illustrative matter should ever be inserted that is not related to something or somebody entering the pupil's experience. Well-selected photographs of public buildings, squares, parks, etc., picturesque costumes, conveyances, striking landscapes and allied subjects ought to constitute the bulk. Pen-and-ink sketches allow even greater play for the imagination of the artist.

Good maps and plans of cities should be supplied, not mere outline charts. First-rate combination physical and political maps can now be obtained. Cities, towns and districts of importance in history and literature should be indicated. Nothing serves better to orientate the pupils and to dispel their ignorance about even contiguous countries than maps.

8. Appendices.—Complete paradigms of the regular verbs and synopses of irregular verbs; these cannot be consulted too often. A brief statement on word-making by derivatives, a conspicuous feature of the Spanish language, would afford an interesting means of enlarging the vocabulary with little effort.

- (A) **Elementary Spanish Reader** with practical exercises for conversation, by Aurelio M. Espinosa, Ph. D. Benj. H. Sanborn and Co., Boston, 1916. 8vo, ix—208 pp.
- (B) **A First Reader in Spanish** by Rudolph Schevill, Ph. D. Ginn and Co., Boston, 1917. 12mo, xiii—181 pp.
- (C) **Lecturas Fáciles con ejercicios** by Lawrence A. Wilkins and Max A. Luria. Silver Burdett and Co., Boston, 1916. 8vo, xiii—266 pp.
- (D) **A Spanish Reader for Beginners** by M. A. De Vitis. Allyn and Bacon, Boston, 1917. 8vo, xiv—345 pp.
- (E) **Elementary Spanish-American Reader** by Eduardo Bergé-Soler and Joel Hatheway. Benj. H. Sanborn and Co., Boston, 1917. 8vo, xiv—460 pp.
- (F) **The Spanish-American Reader** by Ernesto Nelson, with full notes and vocabulary. D. C. Heath and Co., Boston, 1916. 8vo., xiii—367 pp.

(A) Here, in the words of the author's preface, "we have in the whole a good representative collection of choice material from modern Spanish popular and learned prose and verse." Closer examination bears out this statement. The emphasis on the words just quoted very properly falls on 'choice' and 'modern'. The selections have a flavor of peculiar refinement, which at once sets this book off from its fellows with similar titles. It is an exotic, so to speak, in the textbook line, especially for an elementary

reader. It is a collection that any father of fine literary discrimination might well select and edit for his children, real or imagined. And for the youth fortunate enough to be inducted understandingly into the atmosphere of Spanish through this book, it would be strange indeed if his subsequent reading were not of a very high order, and his literary conception and taste at once defined.

Only a scholar and folk-lorist of the reputation that hispanists know Professor Espinosa to be could or would bring out a book like this. For this type of book is a challenge to the accepted standards of classroom reader we have been accustomed to see up to within the past five years. There is here little bid to the practical, notwithstanding p. iv. of the foreword, that "all the selections present idiomatic and practical Spanish." They are practical to the same extent that all polite literature is practical.

In the present overcrowded curricula of our public schools, this book will find favor with that as yet too small number of teachers fortunate enough not to have to keep the counting house in view as the alpha and omega of Spanish secondary instruction. I do not mean to say that the collection here offered is not for young folks. For the most part it is distinctly that, but the cry nowadays is for "realien" and more "realien." The only possible concessions in this direction are the first three chapters, written by the editor himself and entitled: *La Sala de Clase*, *La Clase de Español* and *La Lengua Española*. These are well composed and simple. The editor missed a fine opportunity to incorporate right here a broader *practical*, i. e., every-day vocabulary, which could have been done without violence to his larger aim,—that of keeping his text on a high literary level.

In the other prose selections there is much colorful Spanish, idiomatic even unto quaintness. The four Spanish-American folk-tales are exquisite and have the added value of first-hand oral transmission to the editor.

The two folk-tales of Old Spain are drawn from the splendid Colección Calleja (Madrid). The remaining three prose selections, Nos. XV, XVI and XVII, are from the pens of distinguished contemporaneous literary artists, respectively from Venezuela, Cuba and Spain. The subject-matter of these extracts is rather unrelated to the young American mind. The second selection requires twelve footnotes to two in the first; the verbal forms and syntax here introduced are beyond the pupil in the first six months of his study; the extract from Zamacoís is a bit sophisticated and remote. Benavente's "*Los Reyes Magos*" is very pretty, and the happiest choice of the three.

"*Sábado sin Sol*" is a lively playlet, and lends itself readily for presentation by older students. More of the dramatic, of just this kind, would have been welcomed. In fact, teachers are waiting for a good collection of simple, vivacious Spanish plays, suitable for high school class and club production. Dario's "*La Niña Rosa*" is rather mystical and its topic unsuited to memorizing in our public schools, as the preface recommends. The

Coplas (the musical notation of four of them is given) call for three pages of exposition on Spanish prosody.

*Proverbios*, *Adivinanzas* and *Chistes y Anécdotas* complete the reading matter of the book. Well-chosen questions serve to review and to reinforce idiom and content of the respective selections. Three maps and ten illustrations enhance the value of the book.

To quote from p. 87: "Todo lo raro implica una distinción, una selección, una aristocracia"!

(B) differs from (A) in two respects, in that Professor Schevill frankly declares (1) that his "selections were not made on literary grounds" and (2) that "they were used at one time or another" in his classes. That these were not first-year high-school classes would appear from the reference on p. viii to "adolescents of seventeen or thereabouts." From this it is clear that his book is not intended as a "first" reader in our public secondary schools. If it had been designed for such, the editor's expectations are incompatible with the preparation of the average high-school beginner.

In their forewords both compilers accent sound pedagogical usage, emphasizing the value of the story as a basis for conversation in the classroom, for reproduction, and for memorizing." Schevill lays special stress on expressive reading aloud and recitation,—oratorical agility, as it were. His material lends itself well to this, a good crutch being supplied in the system of marking the accepted syllables in selections I, II, and III.

Professor Schevill has not hesitated to edit the original texts. But while once about it he might have done so to a much greater extent. By this means the grading would have resulted more happily; however, the editor anticipates criticism by asserting, p. vii, "that there can be no greater mistake than in arbitrary simplification of a page by taking out all the genuine idiomatic expressions because they seem hard." Well, high-school teachers at least will object that the wealth of idiom allowed to stand here is absolutely unmanageable with their beginners and clearly beyond their depth. The *diálogos humorísticos* of part II will not be quite so humorous for the pupil, as they are not easy, in spite of their innocent appearance.

As to the subject-matter, the principle of variety set forth on p. vi is consistently adhered to. Each of the three sections itself contains varied material: proverbs, popular tales, fables, humorous poems and fairy stories. Of the thirty selections, eleven are verse and the balance prose, novelistic and historical. All of them are of sustaining interest, offering on the whole a representative and practical vocabulary.

A few typical questions and answers are given after each selection in part I; the notes are accurate and show fine restraint. Twelve illustrations, modern and artistic pen-and-ink sketches, a map of Spain and one of South America complete the apparatus.

(C) This book and the following one (D) are in marked contrast to the two just discussed in that, first, they have been brought out by experienced high school men who know the limitations and tastes of very young pupils, and second, both books are of the pioneer group which



have been appearing the past two years, breaking away from the traditional in their choice of material. Striking a happy medium between the juvenile and the too advanced, they introduce reading matter of present-day interest.

*Lecturas Fáciles* is the earlier publication, and is "the result of the conviction of the authors, after several years of experience teaching the Spanish language, that it is discouraging to the students of the language, as well as contravention of all common-sense pedagogy, to place before them as reading material in the first year and a half, selections from classic Spanish novelists and short-story writers. Such writings can only be understood and appreciated after considerable training in the fundamentals of Spanish, a language abounding in intricate, idiomatic expressions and having great wealth of vocabulary." Adhering to these tenets they have produced a collection of easy readings appropriately entitled "*Lecturas Fáciles*."

Part I has but slight connection with Old Spain, the caption running: "*Sección de Cuentos Europeos*." It consists of European tales and fables, several of them known to us through other anthologies. Their atmosphere is not distinctly Spanish; still, beginning a foreign language on familiar subject-matter has its advantages. The idiom can still be "*muy español*" as is demonstrated here. However, a few literary portraits, characteristic of Spain are distinctly missed. Of the thirty prose selections, nine are verse and suitable for memorizing.

Part II is devoted wholly to the New World. The twenty-one prose selections include: six from the pen of the Chilean, Daniel Barros Grez; a charming Peruvian *tradición* adapted from Ricardo Palma; a historical extract from Guiterras. A biographical note on all of these would not have been amiss. The remaining articles contain various useful information about the South-American republics. Several of these are adaptations from that vast storehouse, the archives of the Pan-American Union.

An appendix gives a synopsis of the irregular verbs and a complete paradigm of the regular verbs, with the English of every form. There are three good maps and forty-six illustrations in half-tone, mostly full-page.

An added feature is a most useful series of exercises, written and oral, of the utmost freshness and variety, some of which follow each reading: questions, idioms, paraphrasing, synopses of verbs, free reproductions, recapitulation, etymological word-lists, etc.,—practically every good and sound device for reinforcing and reiterating the fundamentals of grammar and composition.

(D) This is a book to challenge attention. It represents an infinite amount of thought and labor. There is nothing to hinder the inference that the entire manuscript is the original work of the author although his thanks go out to "the Pan-American Union for a wealth of information regarding the Spanish-American countries." A general idea of the scope and dimensions of this book may be had from these data: Total pages:

431, exclusive of fourteen introductory. The text-book proper numbers 62 pages with 22 titles devoted to Spain; 177 with 22 titles to South America; 4 pages with 8 titles to an anthology of Spanish verse, and 9 pages with 15 titles to South American verse; 30 pages with 15 titles of popular and national songs of Spain and South America, and musical notation for all of them; 46 pages are given over to appendices, mostly statistical; 129 pages to vocabulary, and 14 pages to an index. 146 illustrations and 4 maps embellish the book.

The brief and succinct preface of two pages tells us that "The *Spanish Reader* aims to do four things: to furnish interesting, practical material for first-year reading; to give the student a knowledge of the life and customs of Spain; to teach the geography, history, and literature of Spain and of South America; to equip the pupil with linguistic accoutrements for an invasion of the South American business world." From the same source we learn that the language of "the *Reader* is simple, carefully graded, and idiomatic"; that "to make the work practical, conversation abounds, although there is no lack of narrative"; that "only the present tense is used in the first part of the book . . . thus the reading may begin the first month of school."

A clew to the encyclopedic character of this book is obtained from the Index "which enables the student to find at once any bit of information contained in the book." In fact this volume resembles a sort of adolescent's book of knowledge about various things and places Spanish and Spanish-American, rather than a mere reader. Considering its mechanical arrangement it furnishes one of the handiest and cheapest compendiums, pictorial as well as informational, that can be put into a beginner's hands.

In a work of such comprehensiveness, and by one man, it is inevitable that the mass becomes unmanageable, and its treatment uneven in execution. There is a glut of material, too varied and of necessity too sketchy. It is too much to take up thoroughly and digest in one year.

In the first chapter, "*España*," we have a miscellany of suggestions. Through the conversation of Juan and his cousin Carlos we get kaleidoscopic glimpses of Spanish life and customs. These earlier selections do not follow in systematic sequence. What, e. g., is the connection between *La Academia Española* and its neighbor *Una Corrida de Toros*? The author has missed a fine chance to develop his material and do some first-class grading; there is no real progression.

The 15-page epitome of Spanish literature is well done and merits recognition, but is practically useless in a book of this type for both teacher and pupil. There is not enough time for such matters in the first year, and what is offered condensed presupposes a degree of knowledge that young beginners can not possibly possess. The same may be said, though in lesser degree, of the shorter abridgment of Spanish history. The summaries on geography make good reading.

The second division "*América*" might better have appeared in a separate volume. The various South-American countries are grouped geo-

graphically with a commentary on the geography, history and literature of each. The same objection may be lodged against these synopses of literature as against the ones on Spain. They cannot be appreciated by our boys and girls of high-school age. Their reference value is very slight.

The *Flores de España* and the *Flores de América* are anthologies of representative lyric poets of the old and the new world. The *canciones* bring to us some of the old favorites.

Eight of the ten appendices furnish statistics of more or less valuable information.

There are not as many concessions made to the commercial side as one might expect from the foreword; of business correspondence there is nothing. Exercises, written and oral, are wholly lacking.

The vocabulary deserves notice. It is a repository for all sorts of lore, more or less related. It suggests the old-time polyhistory, needlessly gone afield. Much information is stored up here that is not readily accessible to many a teacher, even in some of the larger communities, and if it were, many would not care to find it out for ourselves; surely the students would not. Some of the marginalia will revive the memory as well as add fresh store to the teacher's own fund of knowledge. One can not escape the feeling that much of this was not intended solely for the pupil. Several of the glosses are disproportionate to their importance in a school reader. For example, Cristóbal Colón and Magallanes are dismissed with mere anglicization of the name, no other data are given; whereas the great mariner's son and heir, Fernando, gets 12 lines; Cortez gets 31, Drake 42, King David 20, and Alfred Nobel 24 lines of commentary. The word "*Corán*" comes in for 22 lines, and "*moro*" for one and a third columns.

The illustrations, with the legends in Spanish, are a treat to the eye and a joy to the heart. They cannot fail to interest even the dullard.

(E) We have here a well-planned book. Its spirit of youth and liveliness is most contagious and the reader reluctantly lays the book aside, for therewith he has parted company with the charming family about whom it centers, especially the two boys.

The unity of execution of this book becomes apparent before one gets very far along. The authors, both practical and experienced high-school men, did their work thoroughly and may safely predicate that "most schools will find the book suitable for first-year work." This volume is but another testimony to the fact that those readers, or parts thereof, written by the editors themselves are invariably more satisfying, because more consistent, than any possible assortment of selections or extracts from unrelated sources pieced together.

This book cannot fail of sustained interest with both pupil and teacher. For after all, what can be more fascinating than the well-knit account of present-day travel to a forward-looking land of new delights,—especially if seen through the eyes of one of one's own age and recounted by himself? We have that situation here,—the itinerary of an American family, the journey and everything incident thereto, recorded and interpreted to us, largely

through conversation, by the two boys, fortunate enough to have mastered Spanish in high school.

The pedagogy of the book is sound. Very successful grading has been done; progression is in easy stages, without being stilted.

The fact that the vocabulary (about 4000 words) comprises nearly one-third of the volume need not startle, as the vocables are mostly of common use, or else such as to be easily associated with the context; they form a good working stock.

The idiomatic expressions are well handled. The subjunctive is not introduced until p. 51, and occurs only in 40 instances, each use explained in a simple footnote.

The 30 sets of questions are stimulating and recapitulate the respective chapters on which they are based. An equal number of easy exercises for translation follows. But why disconnected sentences? Idiom can be drilled in connected discourse as well.

Some of the otherwise splendid illustrations, two dozen of them, might have been replaced by others of more distinctly local atmosphere and much more typical, e. g., those of Buenos Aires.

The copy is very clean, the paper good and the print clear, and the binding substantial,—features characteristic of the whole "Hispanic Series."

(F) The mission of this book is unmistakable. Its distinguished compiler, long identified with South-American educational officialdom, is superbly qualified to interpret to us our neighbor republics to the south.

An educator and a consistent and enthusiastic worker for the establishment of closer social and educational relations between the Americas, it seemed to him that the eagerness with which the American youth is taking up the study of Spanish affords the best possible opportunity for inserting the "entering wedge" as it were, of that sympathetic understanding which will eventually break down the barrier which has hitherto kept the independent peoples of this continent apart from each other, despite the progress in science, art, and education.

Part I, written by the editor, contain 37 chapters on various socio-economic items; eight of these chapters are constructed so as to emphasize the use of various common words and idioms; six of them are formed about topical vocabularies. These selections are frankly utilitarian and deal wholly with commercial themes, but not at all in a dry and lifeless fashion; in fact they are composed with verve. Any educated person will be better off for acquaintance with the every-day business matters under discussion here. The various subjects are entertainingly treated in the form of a dialogue between the editor and the reader.

Part II comprises 88 excerpts by almost as many South-American authors of diverse topics pertaining to natural history, life and customs, historic personages, and literature. The final chapter under the title "El Ideal Americano" brings a symposium of meditations and prophecies by South-American writers.

There is stored here a great amount of valuable information of the most varied nature, which is amplified greatly by the novel method of handling the footnotes. The latter are not only textual and grammatical. By means of "variant readings" and "related words" the vocabulary is skillfully broadened. These footnotes are treated in such a way as to make the customary set of questions and oral exercises quite superfluous. The wealth of paraphrase makes conversational drill both natural and easy.

Such a wealth of ideas is brought together here that an index becomes quite essential to make this the ready reference book that it has turned out to be for the class of pupils into whose hands it is likely to be put, as well as for the private adult student.

The editor presupposes a preparation on the part of the students which would hardly warrant the use of this book before the end of the second year, for he assumes that they "will have acquired a fairly extensive working vocabulary." This supposition accounts for the fact that so many uncommon words used in the text and notes are missing in the vocabulary.

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**The Literary History of Spanish America**, by Alfred Coester, Ph.D.  
The Macmillan Company, New York, 1916. XII + 495 pages.

Dr. Coester's purpose in writing this literary history was, as he tells us in the preface, to offer a guide to those of us in English-speaking America who desire a better acquaintance with the mentality of our Spanish-American neighbors. By thus limiting his purpose to the production of a reliable guide-book; by calling his book a literary history rather than a history of literature; by directing our attention to the difficulties of the task, the lack of reliable sources of information in the various countries treated and the non-existence of adequate collections of books by Spanish-American writers, Dr. Coester disarms adverse criticism. Moreover, the pioneer is judged by what he accomplishes, not by what he fails to do; Dr. Coester, a pioneer in the study of Spanish-American literature, should be given credit for the great mass of information that he has assembled in attractive form, and should not be criticized too severely for certain errors of judgment or of omission.

The choice of a general plan of treatment is a difficult matter when the literatures of eighteen countries, large and small, are to be treated in one volume. To treat separately each country, or certain groups in the case of the smaller ones, would require more than one volume and would result in much repetition of historical facts and general comments, especially for the Colonial period, when similar conditions of life and close political union resulted in a certain homogeneity of literature. Similarly in the second period, that of the struggle for freedom from Spain, a common aim and political